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AUTHOR Christensen, Robert L.; Wylie, Neil
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ABSTRACT

This literature review focuses on the potential for creating a formal multi-state cooperative extension among New England land-grant universities and makes recommendations concerning the structure and operational characteristics of such a consortium. The review examines the following areas: interorganizational cooperation/collaboration; characteristics of an educational consortia; organization theory and collaboration; consortium management and coordination; the importance of institutional and administrative support; the compatibility of consortia in academia; the impacts on efficiency, costs savings; program quality; funding support for consortiums; and collaboration in the extension system. Also included is a list of conclusions resulting from the literature review about the cooperative extension system from which the importance of five guidelines are stressed: (1) clarity of consortium goals; (2) participants' perception of program; (3) program governance; (4) involvement and empowerment of the governing board; and (5) the importance of leadership. Contains a 40-item bibliography. (GLR)

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Dr. Robert L. Christensen, Professor
University of Massachusetts, Amherst
and
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[Preface - The literature on educational consortia and collaborative efforts between educational entities is extensive. The literature specific to formal consortiums of Cooperative Extension systems is considerably more limited, even though historically Cooperative Extension has collaborated in many programmatic efforts, both nationally and in the Northeast region. This literature review includes references that were judged to most cogently speak to the issues to be addressed by a New England Cooperative Extension Consortium. For the sake of reasonable brevity and minimizing redundancy, we have not included the many references repeating or confirming the same conclusions.]

A Background

The Cooperative Extension organizations of the New England land-grant universities have cooperated in the development and delivery of multi-state programming for many years. These activities ranged from informal working relationships between individual educators in the separate institutions to more formal contractual and institutional agreements.

In 1988, the presidents of the New England land-grant universities began discussions of multi-state cooperation among institutions. In that context, the presidents charged the New England directors of Cooperative Extension to develop a plan for multi-state cooperation on a more formal basis. Upon consultation with the presidents, and intense discussion among themselves, the directors determined that a consortium offered the most appropriate mechanism for broad based institutional sharing. In late 1989 a project proposal was prepared and used as a vehicle to attract funding to support a study leading to the development of a consortium model and implementation plan. In 1990 sufficient funding was received to initiate the study.

The directors hired Dr. Robert L. Christensen to serve as the project coordinator and appointed representatives from each of the six Cooperative Extension systems to a design team charged with exploring the options to be considered in forming a consortium, and to make recommendations concerning the structure and operational characteristics of a cooperative extension consortium.

At the end of August 1991, the design team submitted its final report to the New England Cooperative Extension directors for their consideration. A review of relevant literature formed a significant element of that report. The New England directors, in turn, prepared a report for the New England land-grant university presidents titled "Shared Vision - An Implementation Plan for the New England Cooperative Extension Consortium". (New England Cooperative Extension Directors, January 1992)

Interorganizational Cooperation/Collaboration

The faculty, staff, and administrators of separate educational institutions interact with one another in a variety of ways. Most commonly such interaction occurs through professional organizations or associations in which these individuals meet with their counterparts to exchange information, discuss common problems, and engage in professional discourse. Many informal agreements and arrangements derive from such contacts.

It is less common for two or more colleges or universities to advance to a further stage of formal cooperation by creating or joining a consortium. The principal motivation for taking such action is the belief that cooperating with other institutions can help an institution accomplish more, enhance the quality of one or more of the functions it performs, and/or reduce the cost of performing a necessary activity. (Neal, 1988)

> "Academic consortia are voluntary, formal, professionally administered organizations whose missions are related functionally and directly to the member institutions' goals and needs. They engage in multi-institutional programs, projects, and services that result from cooperative planning and shared resources. The formal consortium organization facilitates joint endeavor, and the cooperation enables members to use their resources to greater efficiency and effectiveness." (Tollefson, 1981)

The academic consortium has been invented as a sort of "third-party" agency with the purpose of promoting various forms of collaboration. Voluntary collaboration among institutions is motivated by mutual self interest on the part of the institutions involved. There must be a sense of added strength or something to gain on the part of the collaborating institutions. A consortium exists to serve its member institutions - it is a derivative organization with no independent mission except that defined by its members. (Neal, 1985)

Programs that are most adaptable to multiple organizational involvement are those which have significant need for external input and participation, where the most appropriate individuals to work on the project are spread across several sites, and where competition for funding is strongest. (Mellander and Prochaska, 1989)

The consortium will be successful to the extent that it either serves to enhance the programs and objectives of their constituent institutions or it is able to provide solutions to problems confronted by those member institutions. Cooperative activities conducted by educational institutions, such as those of consortia, will be most successful when they are voluntary, regardless of legal, economic, or political pressures. (Baus, 1988)

It is significant that the institutions that join together in a consortium recognize an inability to unilaterally attain some desired set of goals. The existence and effectiveness of the consortium is dependent on two congruent factors: (1) the recognition by the administration of the institutions that there are limits on the capacity to reach their goals and (2) the value of exceeding

those limitations by entering into a collaborative process with other institutions. (Baus, 1988)

An institution will benefit from participation in a consortium in direct proportion to the interest the institution gives to the consortium. (Ryan, 1981) Individual institutions will pick and choose among the benefits offered by a consortium. As long as there is a balance of benefits to the individual member of the consortium and the consortium itself, the consortium can be considered to be performing its role. (Ryan, 1985)

Characteristics of Educational Consortia

Consortia vary widely in their characteristics. They may have a small number of member institutions (the Five Colleges in western Massachusetts) or a very large number (the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges). They may have different types of members and they may have different histories, leadership, and program emphasis. Neal describes a Consortium as a semi-permanent organization, typically receiving most of its financial support from the contributions of member institutions, and which employs a professional staff with responsibility for encouraging and facilitating the cooperative activities of the member institutions. (Neal, 1988)

Franklin Patterson, who made a pathbreaking study of educational consortia, stated "In terms of size, my own sense is that it is difficult indeed for a cooperative effort to be very successful with more than seven or eight member institutions." Patterson also postulated that the larger the membership of institutions and the greater the range of educational levels encompassed, the more ambiguous will be the character of the consortium. (Patterson , 19[illegible]) . Several authors have suggested that it is wise for a consortium to have its membership in a close geographic region because of the reduced costs and ease of communication among members and the exchange of

faculty expertise, among other factors. (Ryan, 1981 and Silverman and Egner, 1969)

The most common forms of academic sharing among educational institutions fall into two categories. The first category of sharing is the development of programs that give universities access to each other's resources through exchange agreements. Most commonly this is accomplished by student exchanges, faculty exchanges, or cross-referencing of courses. (Pritzen, 1988)

Stauffer (1981) suggests that potential cost advantages, avoidance of duplication, increased efficiency, and other benefits can make a consortium act as a "safety net" in times when financial resources are stagnant or declining. More than one writer has related the emergence of consortia to times of crisis in the environment shared by institutions. Tollefson described the usual reaction of institutions in retrenchment as conducting evaluations, priority setting, and planning unilaterally while ignoring other institution's needs, interests, capacities, and resources. He views the consortium as a means for dealing with needs and capacities comprehensively while integrating and sharing some resources.
(Tollefson, 1981)

An extensive study and synthesis of research on collaborative arrangements included the finding that where collaborative improvement efforts are important to participating organizations, they can and do survive the reduction or elimination of external support and become "institutionalized". (Cates, 1983)

Collaboration - Insights From Organization Theory

Although dictionary definitions would imply that the terms are essentially synonymous, experts in organizational behavior make some important distinctions between cooperative and

collaborative structures. Habana-Hafner (1989) has described three levels of cooperation which organizations may use to work together. They are termed "networking", "coordination", and "collaboration". Historically, the Cooperative Extension System has practiced networking extensively. Networking is relatively informal, relies on loose linkages, involves little if any commitment of funding or staff resources, allows member to freely participate or not, and involves little no loss of autonomy.

Habana-Hafner describes coordination as the next level of commitment on the continuum. There are a number of examples of coordination by state Cooperative Extension systems in New England. These include coordinated activities of specialists in fruit, vegetables, poultry, and dairy Extension programs. Collaboration, the final level on the continuum, is characterized as a strongly linked partnership. Purposes are specific, structure and processes are formalized, membership involves commitment of resources, significant autonomy in decision making is delegated, and the collaborative organization can assume a highly visible presence. All of the attributes of collaboration would seem to apply to a New England Cooperative Extension Consortium.

Russell (1991) has summarized distinctions among several forms of strategic alliance. She makes the important point that while both cooperation and collaboration involve sharing, collaboration conveys a stronger sense of interdependence and "co-creation".

Varney (1976) offers several insights of value in the consideration of an Extension Consortium. He makes the obvious point that when the goals and values of employees agree with those of the organization, it is highly probable that employee behavior will be consistent with the expectations of the organization. In a diversified and departmentalized organization, however,

congruence is more difficult to attain. In collaborative structures overall goals tend to be set at the top of the structure while goal setting for units within the organization involves group processes. That is, individuals will be involved in the goal setting process as it relates to their own department.

As a consequence it may be expected that in more complex collaborative organizations, individuals will have a strong commitment to the group goals and a relatively lower commitment to the broader organizational goals. What happens is that the group establishes group norms and expectations of its members. Commitment and cooperation is expected of members and each member recognizes the interdependent nature of the relationships in the group. Thus, the individual's goals in a collaborative organization are frequently congruent with the goals of other individuals. Exact congruence is not necessary as long as the several sets of individual goals work together to strengthen and meet the organization's goals.

It is not surprising that voluntary cooperative projects will not be successful unless those who must carry them out have a part in designing them and really want them to succeed. Joint planning activities that are project centered will have a higher probability of success. (Wood, 1973 and Fink, 1974)

Consortium Management and Coordination

In spite of their best intentions, those university administrators who participate in the formation of a consortium seldom are able to devote the time required in day-to-day management and oversight required for continuing vitality and viability. (Wylie, 1991)

Pritzen believes that a consortium needs a central organization and identity to be successful. She maintains that a strong central organization gives a form and a voice of institutional

commitment to cooperation. It provides a mechanism and structure for the definition of common needs and goals and the staff to help plan, implement, and monitor the activities that will further these goals. (Pritzen, 1988)

The growth and strength of a consortium has been found to be strongly related to the leadership and drive of the Director. Consortia in which the institutional members are internally oriented and where the consortia programs are peripheral rather than central to the institutional priorities will be focused more on administrative detail than on substantive issues. It then follows that the Director in such consortia will be looked upon as an administrative aide rather than a leader. (Silverman and Egner, 1969)

The successful consortium director is able to elicit, from both internal and external sources, a variety of suggestions for consortium activities and build a consensus for some of them. A consortium director comes to have greater authority or influence by virtue of his/her perspective and history of past successes. A consortium director has relatively little administrative or budgetary authority and is most successful when providing collegial leadership. (Wylie, 1991)

Consortium Directors are expected to fulfill difficult and often impossible roles. They must cope with the traditional autonomy with which the member institutions have conducted their affairs and the fact that, in some senses, the members are competitors. (Baus, 1988) Yet as Ryan notes (1988) the key to a successful collaborative enterprise is the leadership and imagination necessary to create and articulate a vision of an improved future with benefits accruing to the members.

Consortia tend to be formed with a certain amount of ambiguity as to specific tasks to be performed. In most cases there are a small number of quite specific activities coupled with a set

of purposes broad enough to encompass all of the concerns of the member institutions. The Director of a consortium may find even more ambiguity in his/her job description. They are expected to be self starters, capable of working with minimal supervision, imaginative and creative, diplomatic and persuasive, flexible, have the capacity to give leadership and serve as a catalyst, while not overstepping the proper bounds of the position. The individual who assumes such a position must have the temperament to be comfortable in an ambiguous role, with open ended goals, without a strong mandate, multiple would-be bosses, and with the vulnerability of a non-tenured position. (Neal, 1985)

At the same time, one writer has warned of Director/Coordinators who may use the consortium for purposes that may not be fully consistent with those of the membership. Board representatives are cautioned that they need to devote the necessary time and energy in oversight and guidance lest the Director take over control and direction of the consortium. This writer also suggested that consortium Directors be appointed for limited terms and that the office location be rotated among the member institutions. (Ryan, 1981) It should be noted, however, that most established and enduring consortia do not follow the practice of rotating the office location, and the turnover rate among consortia directors tends to be lower than among the members of the consortia governing board.

The networking, facilitating, and service functions relating to the functioning of the consortium require time and resources that cannot simply be added to the workloads of often overloaded internal staffs and budgets of member institutions. Tasks and responsibilities relating to the consortium will always assume a lower priority compared to the demands of the home institution. Thus, it would appear that professional staff are necessary if the consortium is to

make substantive accomplishments. (Baus, 1988)

Importance of Institutional and Administrative Support

A consortium has little chance of success unless the administrators of member institutions give visible and tangible support to its activities. A marginal commitment on the part of institutional leaders has been termed as having the greatest debilitating effect on cooperation. The importance of university presidential commitment cannot be overemphasized because only the presidents can commit their institutions to major cooperative arrangements with other institutions. (Patterson, 1974 ; Ryan, 1988)

> " ... the first and most fundamental desideratum is commitment among the leadership of the consortium to the cooperative enterprise. Institutional leaders - presidents, chancellors, deans, and the like - must encourage and support academic cooperation and commit their institutions to a financial and academic policy of continuing support." (Pritzen, 1988, p.42)

Administrators of the universities that belong to a consortium typically give only a fraction of their attention and loyalty to the consortium. Few will contribute money, time, or energy to a consortium unless there is a recognizable payoff for their own universities. (Neal, 1988) It needs to be recognized that most administrators see the consortium as ancillary and not vital to the mission and goals of their institution, that the mission and goals of separate institutions are not identical, and that those institutions with greater endowments of staff and funding will see little to gain from a consortium. (Ryan, 1988)

A special problem for educational consortia is the relatively rapid turnover among university administrators. New presidents or chancellors may be unfamiliar with the purpose and value of membership in a Consortium. As a consequence, Consortium leadership may need to engage in a more or less continuous information and education process with administrators. On the other

hand, Wylie (1991) notes that once established, consortium programs can survive the departure of one (or even several) leaders from member institutions.

Probably the most important role of a governing board for a consortium is that of setting the agenda for consortium projects and activities. However, it is essential that paths be provided for ideas and expressions of priority to reach the board from the constituencies served by the consortium. (Wylie, 1991)

Compatibility of Consortia in Academia

Patterson expressed his belief that voluntary cooperation among institutions must overcome jealously protected institutional autonomy. In fact, he stated that "... institutions could find some protection for their basic institutional freedom by voluntarily giving some of it up in consortia that provide collective strength educationally and politically as well as mechanisms for achieving more efficient use of available economic resources." (Patterson, 1974, p. 120)

Pritzen (1988) makes a number of points about the incompatibility of sharing through a consortium with the traditions of the academic community. Sharing does not come easily because the institutions tend to be competitive with one another. Competition occurs in attracting students, recruiting faculty, and external funding. Institutions also take pride in the uniqueness and quality of programs, prestige of faculty, innovativeness, and constituent support. At the heart of this competition is the institution's claim to excellence of its faculty and staff and its academic programs. Ryan (1988) states "The aims of consortia, although noble, are sometimes inherently in conflict with the nature of academe, where cooperation is not the generally accepted norm."

Bevan and Baker (1988) argue that positive aspects stemming from consortia activity are persuasive. They maintain that a consortium approach accentuates the possibilities for utilizing

a diversity of talents while at the same time promoting the synergy that comes from having people of like interests working together. The results will be expressed through a unified approach that is more integrated and comprehensive. The Consortium may present greater opportunity for innovation and experimentation. Finally they suggest that the institutions working together represent both a broader funding base and an opportunity for accessing additional funding.

Fuller (1988) characterizes cooperation among institutions as "risky" and says this is the reason why cooperation is usually focused in relatively safe areas. The following from Fuller's paper is worthy of quoting because it suggests that consortia offer a way of dealing with more risky strategies:

> "Colleges and universities are generally well served by procedures and traditions that make them behave cautiously and undertake new ventures slowly, if at all. ... But these familiar and useful conservative qualities are sometimes too effective and unnecessarily limit the change and steady adaptation that institutions also need. Consortia can offer a manageable way to explore possibilities that might be dangerously different from the established traditions of their member institutions." p 191

The universities are composed of faculties in schools, colleges, and departments. The faculty owe first allegiance to their department and discipline. Peer influence has been demonstrated to strongly affect the values and activities of individual faculty. As Patterson has observed:

> "The consortium, under suspicion by the faculty for being an outside influence to begin with, usually compounds this suspicion by proposing radical programs - many cross disciplinary, many cross institutional." p 55

A study of two highly successful consortium models involving faculty from separate universities provides additional insights. For example, when counterpart departments in different institutions enjoy relatively equal strength and prestige on their own campuses they will be more

willing and likely to cooperate. Hostility or resistance arises when there is a perceived threat to jobs, vested interests, or the authority or prestige of departments and individuals. (Jacobson and Belcher, 1973)

Impacts on Efficiency, Costs Savings and Program Quality

"In general, a university will reap benefits from a consortium in direct proportion to its input and interest." (Ryan, 1981) The first objective of institutional presidents who join in a consortium is to save money. (L. Patterson, 1974) Joining together in a consortium arrangement would intuitively appear to offer economies. These economies would theoretically arise from the reduction of duplication of activities and materials, more efficient utilization of staff resources, and utilization of technologies that allow economies of size.

Unfortunately, cost reductions have been found to be difficult to achieve. (Baus, 1988) In fact, the establishment and operation of a third-party entity represents an added cost that competes directly with the internal needs of the member institutions.(Pritzen, 1988). Franklin Patterson (1974) termed the economic gains through cooperation to be more a matter of shadow than substance. Lewis Patterson (1971) pointed out that, in fact, a clear-cut financial implication of consortia is that an institution will increase its operational costs, not diminish them, as a result of joining in a consortium. Tollefson (1981), however, asserted that all the programs he examined had realized increased efficiency in curriculum, teaching, services, and administration. Cates (1983) says that consortium costs are often moderate but cautions that they should not be underestimated. She puts this possible cost increase in perspective, however, by emphasizing that one needs to also look at the benefits resulting from the consortium activity.

The Five Colleges Consortium has discovered that success in cooperation is more predictable when the primary goal is to achieve educational benefits and permit promising innovations, not when it is to realize economies. (Jacobson and Belcher, 1973)

Neal (1988) lists some principal objectives served by a consortium and a set of attributes. The principal objectives are: enabling universities to achieve more, do something better, or reduce the cost of an activity. The main attributes of the consortium are communication, coordination, and facilitation.

Baus (1988) states that consortia are successful when they enhance the programs or objectives of their constituent institutions or provide solutions to the problems confronted by those institutions. Effectiveness of the consortium is determined by the perceived ability of the consortium to meet particular needs of member institutions.(Bradley, 1971) Staff development has been identified as an area that is cost effective when done cooperatively. (Rose, 1988) Consortia can be more efficient when they centralize administrative functions by acting as a fiscal agent and overall coordinator. (Mellander and Prochaska, 1989)

Cooperating institutions will typically increase the quality of their offerings and services. (Tollefson, 1981) Areas that lend themselves to consortium activity are: (1) assisting and meeting student (clientele) needs, (2) information processing - data base access, library services, telecommunications, (3) professional/ staff development, and (4) joint purchasing services - publications production, etc. (Baus, 1988) The consortium effort will produce an integrated and more comprehensive program, provide a broader funding base, and accentuate the possibilities for utilizing the diverse talents and knowledge of staff - all of which leads to improved results. (Rose, 1988)

Funding for Consortiums

It is recognized that the primary obligation of the institutional members of a consortium is to the home institution. Pritzen (1988) has defined the nature of the problem - "...the additional funding necessary to fund the third-party consortium must compete directly with the internal needs of the institution (and usually loses in tough times)." As institutions face the need for retrenchment they tend to direct their evaluation and planning efforts to their other needs and goals. Such an approach ignores other institution's needs, interests, capacities, and resources. A consortium offers a "bridging" mechanism that makes such mutual consideration possible. (Tollefson, 1981)

As might be expected, the withdrawal of member institutions can threaten the viability of a Consortium both in terms of funding and intellectual commitment. On the other hand, once established, Consortium programs can survive the departure of some of its members as long as it continues to serve the remaining membership. Obviously, Consortia with a small number of members are more vulnerable.

External funding support of consortia is a seemingly attractive alternative. Cooperatively developed proposals have enabled institutions to obtain federal and philanthropic grants that, individually proposed might not have been received. (Tollefson, 1981) Such funding has not furthered the cause of cooperation as much as might be hoped. "External funding, whether from federal or foundation sources, has been characterized by a peculiar, short-sighted specificity." (Patterson, 1974) Successful consortiums commonly rely on base funding from their member institutions supplemented by special grants from outside agencies to undertake major projects.

Jacobson and Belcher (1973) included the following in their study of two successful consortia:

> "When accepting (or requesting) large grants for a major joint effort such as a communications network, ask: Will it replace one way of doing something with a more efficient or effective method, or will it be largely an add-on? Will the benefits be great enough to merit support from institutional budgets if and when outside funds evaporate?"

The need to have a coherent set of goals and plans is important. As Wood (1973) found, a consortium does not survive long if it's primary focus is on getting the money and only secondarily deciding how it shall be used. Some experts assert without equivocation that a consortium proposal nearly always has a superior chance to receive funding in a competitive situation. (Mellander and Prochaska, 1989)

Collaboration in the Extension System

The long tradition of collaborative activity by Cooperative Extension systems is somewhat at variance with the general academic model. There is sufficient evidence of pride of quality and individual achievement by administrators and staff in every state to suggest that not all would automatically find a consortium approach desirable. Nevertheless, this obstacle should be no more difficult to overcome than for other university units in the several states.

One of the many challenges facing an Extension Consortium will be that of dealing with the traditional insularity of the disciplines. A Cooperative Extension Consortium will necessarily rely heavily on many specialists who have academic faculty appointments. Their participation will be crucial to the success of consortium programs. Extension specialists are products of focused disciplinary training and most are either members of, or housed with, university disciplinary departments. Just as universities are competitive in certain respects, departments within a university are similarly competitive. It is a matter of some irony to note that as the disciplines

have become more narrowly focused the problems of society increasingly demand integrated multidisciplinary solutions.

Rasmussen (1989) enumerated several challenges for the Extension system's future. Among them the following:

> "Total university involvement, as well as cooperation with other universities and the private sector, is needed to meet multidisciplinary applied research and educational programming requirements." p 227

This is not a new challenge for Cooperative Extension. However, achieving the involvement advocated by Rasmussen has met with mixed success in universities across the nation. In some degree, a consortium which allows the "pooling" of resources of several Extension systems can broaden the base of disciplinary expertise and produce the potential leverage to induce the needed changes.

Warner and Christensen (1984) conducted an in-depth analysis of the national Cooperative Extension System. They forecast revolutionary changes in the technologies that would enable access to information, data, and expertise. Further, they suggested that these changes in communications could lead to entirely new staffing schemes. Thus, access to the expertise of researchers and specialists would not be limited by state lines and that technologies for access to information and data bases could well replace some types of traditional printed publications.

In 1987 the ECOP Futures Task Force issued its report which contained the following recommendation:

> "Recommendation 32: Under the leadership of the federal system (ES-USDA), cooperative multistate efforts should be encouraged in the establishment of program delivery options and the development of high priority program materials."

The recommendation seems to be urging the federal partner (ES-USDA) to find ways to facilitate multistate activities. The problem is not so much in philosophy as it is in current federal rules and regulations. At this time it appears that federal rules on granting of funds and accountability would make it difficult, if not impossible, to fund multistate programs.

This recommendation from the Futures Task Force should not be taken to imply that multistate efforts have not taken place. The fact is that the states have been cooperating in many ways. The survey taken in connection with this Consortium project revealed a large number of multistate program activities that have occurred across the nation for a number of years. Program sharing in terms of publications, curricular materials, video programs, multistate conferences, etc. are common across the country. However, instances where specialists have assignments to work in two or more states are rare. Multistate sharing/staffing is defined as a situation where a specialist is shared by two or more land-grant universities with the salary and support costs of the position shared in some proportion among the participating states.

Interest in the possibility of such arrangements exists as is evidenced by the 1987 Long Range Planning Task Force Report in Ohio:

> " {The Ohio Cooperative Extension should} Consider reciprocal agreements with other states to provide a wider range of specialists, especially in subject matter areas where the primary need is resource material. Specialists shared between states will have primary responsibilities to provide bulletins, fact sheets, videotapes, computer programs, and agent consultation. Some formal teaching will be done across state lines and in-service to other states." p 9

A study by Conradi (1990) assessed the interest in multi-state specialist sharing in the North Central region as well as perceived advantages and disadvantages of such sharing. She found wide-spread interest in sharing personnel but a number of serious reservations about practical aspects. The perceived barriers to multistate sharing were identified as: (1) the lack of a model

for such sharing, (2) lack of the funding needed, (3) getting the decision makers together to agree, (4) attitudes of administrators and staff, and (5) lower in priority than other concerns. Of some interest, given the purpose of the New England Consortium Project, is that the lack of a model was cited as the biggest barrier.

Conradi summarized perceived advantages and disadvantages of sharing personnel as follows:

Advantages -

*wider dissemination of knowledge and information
*less duplication of effort and information sources
*increased opportunity for specialization by staff
*potential for development of stronger programs
*enhancing cooperation among professional staff

Disadvantages-

*determination of equity in funding
*possible increased travel time and expense
*competition for ownership of ideas
*confusion over "home base" for specialist
*spreading a staff person "too thin"
*creating too large a geographic area

Conradi's study also found near unanimity among staff and administrators in the belief that a specialist with a multistate assignment should have one state as a home base and receive administration and supervision from that state. Of some interest, however, are some insights from a Michigan extension consortium. That study warned that consortium staff identified with an individual institution gave allegiance to that institution with a resulting loss of the objective, comprehensive attitudes essential for consortium success. (Fink, 1974)

It appears essential, from the experiences of examples of multistate sharing, that specialists who have assignments that require them to work across state lines should be provided with a clear set of written expectations concerning the multistate role. Faculty peer review panels and

university administrators unfamiliar with the demands of extension programs need to discard narrow institutional perspectives if there is to be fair and objective evaluation of performance and accomplishment.

The Directors in the North Central region devoted considerable time to the study of multistate programming in the late 1980's. In a 1987 meeting of the North Central Directors several conditions were put forth as necessary criteria for multistate programs.

> "If geographic differences are of no consequence to the subject matter under consideration. ... If the nature of the subject matter makes work in a particular field especially expensive. ... If a viable approach exists that makes for effective teaching of the subject matter to clientele when clientele are located in more than one state. ... If a project can be identified that is narrow enough to permit agreement on goals, approaches, outcomes, and a time frame for completion."

Boyle and Borich in a 1988 meeting of the North Central Directors provided additional criteria for multistate programming.

> 1. The focus of the program should be a need/problem/issue that cuts across state boundaries and is guided by national rather than state or local policies and initiatives.
> 2. The effort should be a major program priority affecting most counties in all participating states.
> 3. Each participating state should have the ability and commitment to contribute faculty/staff and other resources in relevant and complementary disciplines and areas of expertise.

Two agricultural economists have examined alternative strategies for fostering regional specialization and sharing of extension economist resources. Those strategies included the following:

1. The "status quo" (informal sharing arrangements)
2. Exchange through market procedures (consulting)
3. Use of formally sanctioned regional committees
4. Formal agreements between two or more states
5. Regional specialists with federal appointments

The strategy involving formal agreements between states was reasoned to have advantages in terms of efficiency of the total regional system, greater productivity, and higher quality of programs. Disadvantages could be expected from possible increases in travel and administrative costs, reduced flexibility on individual campuses, cumbersome and sluggish bureaucratic procedures, and specialist difficulties in meeting promotion and tenure criteria. (Christensen and Storey, 1985)

LESSONS FROM THE LITERATURE FOR THE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM

* Consortia require clear and unequivocal support of administrators at all levels.
* Consortia require continuous nurturing.
* Consortia need to have a clear purpose and goals.
* Consortia require participation and involvement of faculty and staff in goal setting and program planning.
* Consortia can provide an organizational entity for cooperation.
* Consortia can facilitate "pooling" of expertise.
* Consortia can reduce duplication of effort.
* Consortia can offer efficiencies in development and production of programs and materials.
* Consortia can offer a "buffer" or neutral ground to avoid "turf" problems and jealousies.
* A consortium is not a primary vehicle for reducing staff or operating costs, although some savings may be possible.

* Administrators/institutions must be willing to give up some autonomy and delegate some authority.

* There must be some perceived advantage or payoff to each consortium member.

* The consortium will be most successful in focusing on areas where the project/program/accomplishment cannot be achieved by the institutions functioning independently.

* Some "bureaucracy" is necessary to provide the continuing leadership and coordination that are the major functions of the consortium.

* Convenient and rapid communication is an essential element of an efficient and smoothly functioning consortium.

* The traditional independence/autonomy of institutions can be a serious barrier to consortia collaboration.

* Faculty with multistate responsibilities must receive special consideration in the university rewards system.

* The operating charter of a consortium and the responsibilities of the members needs to be clearly spelled out.

* It is essential that a "model" be developed that defines the organization and operational processes for the consortium.

What Would an "Ideal" Cooperative Extension Consortium be Like?

Having reviewed a significant amount of the literature on consortiums, and having conducted a survey of existing cooperative and collaborative efforts between Extension systems, we will conclude with a description of some of the elements that appear to be essential for a successful

Cooperative Extension consortium. Five areas seem critical: goals, program, governance, involvement and empowerment, and leadership.

1. **Goals.** A concise statement of the purpose or goals for the consortium should be developed and available to everyone as a reminder of what the consortium is about. For the New England Cooperative Extension Consortium, the goals stated are:

-- To improve public access to the research base of the land-grant universities and to Cooperative extension's expertise and educational programs.

-- To maintain and enhance the quality of technical expertise and educational programs offered to the public in the six New England states.

-- To increase the efficiency with which Cooperative extension develops and delivers programs in the six New England states.

Flexibility is one key to the long-term success of a consortium, but a succinct goal statement will help everyone to understand the basic rationale for the consortium. It will also have a critical meaning as the continuing touchstone against which proposed new programs and activities will be compared.

2. **Program.** Consortiums succeed or fail to the degree that they successfully undertake projects and programs their members perceive to be to their benefit.

--As long as the consortium's activities fall within the general goals of the organization, which specific activities are undertaken probably matters less than that activities are undertaken at all!

--Most consortiums evolve, changing their programs over time, and sometimes modifying goals to reflect changing needs.

Many consortiums undertake multiple program activities. Except at the level of the governing board which sees the whole picture, support for a consortium tends to be for specific programs rather than for the scope of consortium activity. Most people involved with a consortium identify with particular activities or programs, and often have little knowledge or concern for the whole.

One of the greatest dangers for a fledgling consortium is that it may become paralyzed by the myriad potential program opportunities that present themselves; often more opportunities than can be addressed with the available resources, and each having a constituency advocating action. Equally dangerous to the consortium is attempting to respond to all of the demands and failing to produce quality programs in a timely manner.

In the case of the Extension consortium, it will be important to select a small set of program areas for initial attention. In the beginning, projects should have broad general support and a relatively high probability of success. Only after these programs have been successfully established should an expansion to other programs be initiated. Greater programmatic risks can be undertaken as the consortium matures.

3. **Governance.** All consortiums need a governing board to review and set policy for the organization.

--The board needs to be representative of the member organizations, and to function to ensure that the needs of each member are being adequately met.

--The board is the source of authority for the consortium's director, who operates on its behalf and normally serves at the pleasure of the board.

--In the case of the New England Cooperative Extension Consortium, the six New England Directors will serve as the consortium's governing board.

--The Directors, who have authority for personnel and funding, are directly responsible for policy formation, allocation of resources for consortium operations, and supervision of the executive officer.

The New England Cooperative Extension Consortium is fortunate to have received the specific endorsement of the presidents of all six of the New England Land-Grant universities. Continuing support from the highest administrative levels has been demonstrated to be essential for maximum consortium effectiveness, and the governing board members plan to make regular reports to their presidents regarding the performance and accomplishments of the consortium.

4. Involvement and Empowerment. A variety of other advisory groups or committees may also assist in setting program priorities for the consortium, but the final authority rests with the board.

--It would be normal for each major program to have a representative advisory committee to assist the consortium's director. If, for example, the Extension consortium decided to institute a joint (multi-state) publications effort to support one or more consortium programs, a desirable first step would be for the director to convene an advisory committee made up of publications people from each of the individual Extension Systems.

--The advisory committee representatives would be identified by the board member from each Extension System.

It is abundantly clear that successful collaboration in a consortium framework is dependent on the involvement and commitment of staff in the participating organizations. The New England Cooperative Extension Consortium seeks to further and support staff involvement

through Program Teams and Working Groups. These entities are charged with problem identification, prioritization within program areas, definition of delivery methods, and delivery. Obviously, the board provides policy direction and retains final approval of personnel and budgetary allocations.

Cooperative Extension has historically maintained a strong clientele grassroots advisory system. This responsiveness to the "end users" needs is necessary to fulfillment of the Extension mission as well as for maintenance of the political base that supports funding appropriations. The New England Cooperative Extension Consortium does not intend to create a new regional client advisory structure. Instead, user input will be acquired through existing local and state advisory groups. This input will help to identify commonalities in needs and potential for collaborative program activity.

5. **Leadership.** Leadership in a consortium begins with the policy directions set by the governing board and implemented through the consortium's director.

--The leadership style of the director must be appropriate for working with multiple constituencies, and the optimal style is probably best described as democratic, problem solving, and collegial.

--Consortium directors rarely have the unambiguous formal decision making authority possessed by directors of other sorts of organizations.

--Successful directors possess tolerance of ambiguity, great patience, and unflagging persistence. They typically work toward building a consensus from many diverging views.

The formal authority of the director is less important than his or her ability to get people from diverse circumstances to work together toward common goals. In addition, the director needs to promote communication among the various consortium constituencies, especially between the constituencies and the governing board. In the case of the New England Cooperative Extension Consortium, as long as the board has confidence in the director, and as long as the director is successful in developing and sustaining programs to serve the member organizations, the success of the consortium will be assured.

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